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Press Release

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Attorney General McGraw Warns of Medicare Scam; Phony Calls Say Personal Information Must Be Provided

CHARLESTON – West Virginia Attorney General Darrell McGraw is warning the state's consumers to be on the lookout for a Medicare phone scam that is making the rounds.

The scheme targeting Medicare seniors has been moving through West Virginia, Kentucky and other states in the region. The fraudulent phone calls – identified as originating from 866-234-2255 – claim to represent a Medicare or Social Security Office and ask consumers for personal information so that new Medicare cards can be issued.

When people refuse to provide the requested information, a phony supervisor comes on the line to say that the information must be provided to remain enrolled in the Medicare program. The thieves then use information collected to steal victims' identities and remove funds from accounts through checks or electronic transactions. A call to the 866 number used by the Medicare scammers as their caller ID reaches a recording confirming that that is being used in the Medicare spoof.

Attorney General McGraw advises consumers to check caller ID on incoming calls and to avoid giving out personal information including policy numbers, date of birth, social security numbers, credit card numbers or bank account information over the phone or on the internet – especially when speaking with or replying to email from strangers.

"Be suspicious of any requests you get asking for personal or financial data," McGraw warns. "Never offer information. Always verify the identity of the person on the other end of the phone or emailing you. And remember that scammers will typically just hang up if confronted or threatened with a call to the police or attorney general."

Thieves use similar methods for a tax refund scam in which fake IRS phone calls or emails ask for personal and banking information so that the consumer supposedly can receive an additional tax refund. McGraw reminds consumers that the IRS does not solicit personal information via e-mail. These scams join a recent rash of "The Grandparent Scam," in which seniors receive calls from thieves pretending to be a relative in need and asking for money to be wired.

If you receive a Medicare scam call or believe you have been a victim of fraud, call the Attorney General's Consumer Hotline 1-800-368-8808

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